

Wentworth Park

Media Inquiry, 6/7 August 2002

Enquiry from Susie Moore, ABC, 6 August. Referred by Media Office.

Susie asked "Is there any testing done of old tip sites?"

I answered that there is not any regular monitoring of old tip sites, of which there are many in the Hobart area. Recently closed tips, e.g. Lauderdale, have post-closure monitoring programs for a number of years.

I noted that I believed that we may have investigated some complaints about old tip sites on a case-by-case basis over the years. This may have involved some testing, but I would need to check on this.

She then asked whether I could find out whether any testing had been done. I asked her the context in which she was asking, and whether there was any specific site she was investigating.

Department of Primary Industries, Water and Environment
Tasmania

At this point she mentioned Wentworth Park.

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I undertook to find out if we have done any testing in that area, and ring her back on 7 August. On 7 August I provided her with the following information.

This Department has not undertaken any testing of soil or groundwater in the vicinity of Wentworth Park. We are aware of the concerns that Mrs Lopatinuik's has raised, and have liaised with the Public Health Division on the matter. We have also carried out a literature search and considered whether a program of testing would help allay Mrs Lopatinuik's concerns or shed any light on the issue that she has raised. We have concluded that it would be highly unlikely that monitoring or soil testing would help for the following reasons:

- Most importantly, our understanding is that neither the Public Health Division nor the Menzies Centre have found any evidence to suggest that the incidence of cancers in the area presents an unusual pattern that would warrant a full scale investigation.
- We understand that the tip was used for domestic waste rather than hazardous waste. While we cannot rule out that some hazardous materials were deposited in it, we do not know what these might have been (if any), and therefore, do not know what we would be looking for, or where.
- Any information that we find now will not show conclusively whether there is any link between the tip and the perceived increase in cancer rates. We understand that Mrs L has said that the cancers are all in longer-term residents and that new residents are not affected. She has suggested possible causes as being spraying that was done for mosquitoes when the tip was active (30 – 40 years ago), a connection with transformers that have been replaced etc etc.

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Susie Moore said that she could understand these reasons. She asked whether I knew what chemicals had been used for spraying the mosquitoes. I said I did not – Clarence Council may have records if anyone did. We referred to the program on DDT shown on SBS on the night of 6 August. She asked whether it would be possible to test for DDT in dust – I said that it would if you were able to establish that it had been used and had some idea of where to test.

Susie thanked me and said that she would be calling the Menzies Centre and the Division of Public Health.

Warren Jones
7 August 2002

